



February 22, 2022

Legislative Hearing Testimony Submission – General Law Committee

H.B. No. 5146 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SUPERMARKET FOOD DONATION PROGRAM

My name is Molly Devanney, and I am here on behalf of my family business Highland Park Market. We operate three stores in Hartford County. I also have the privilege to serve on the board directors of Connecticut Foodshare and teach Sustainable Food Systems at Manchester Community College.

The Highland Park Market Family continues to follow the leadership and values our grandfather Jack and father Tim instilled in us. “If you have enough food on the table, it is your responsibility to feed anyone in our community who is hungry.” Over the past two years, this has become more and more prevalent and, in many cases, challenging. Many local food pantries were having a hard time getting proteins, and we were able to step up and get product for them. We are there for our partners when they needed it most and not only from a food donation—we also support them financially.

Highland Park Market practices a “zero waste” policy in our stores. Daily produce items get picked up or dropped off at a local food pantry, volunteers pick up bread and baked goods and grocery donations. Highland Park Market also has been an active participant in the “*meat the needs*” program. This program was started years ago with Connecticut Foodshare where we freeze meat, entrees and deli packaged goods and they brought to the food bank and distributed. If the items are no longer able to be consumed by humans, we have a program with the local Lutz Children's Museum and farmers who will come and pick up items which are not made for human consumption.

In our business food safety is our number one priority. When Highland Park works with donors from Connecticut Foodshare as well as local pantries, they are aware of the Food Safety standards which we follow from OSHA. All volunteers are trained to take food, store, and transport it properly. Volunteers are also able to pick out when the product is not stored properly and able to get to the pantry in a timely fashion.

Over the past two years, Connecticut Foodshare has become a statewide agency where we have been able to address and continue to address hunger in our state. The systems we have in place are working. I live and volunteer in Manchester. We had a need for more mobile Food Distribution sites in our town. Town leaders worked with Connecticut Foodshare and came up with more distribution in sites where it was difficult for people to get access to food. Manchester has now added more sites and will continue to keep a watch on the need. I would encourage other towns to reach out to Connecticut Foodshare if they are experiencing the same problem. I would say this is very much like running our store operations. If we don't know there is a problem, we can't fix it.

Mandating a food donation policy or adding regulation adds no increase to the current charitable food supply—if anything, it could have the unintended consequence to discourage charitable food donations if additional paperwork in the stores becomes necessary.

Thank you for considering the views of Highland Park Market Please contact me via email molly@highlandparkmarket.com or 860-338-1612 if I can provide additional information about our position.

Respectfully submitted,

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